



Volume 43  
Issue 2 June

Article 13

2016

**Review of *Counter- Recruitment and the Campaign to Demilitarize Public Schools*. Scott Hardung & Seth Kershner. Reviewed by Daniel Liechty**

Daniel Liechty  
Illinois State University, [dliecht@illinoisstate.edu](mailto:dliecht@illinoisstate.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

**Recommended Citation**

Liechty, Daniel (2016) "Review of *Counter- Recruitment and the Campaign to Demilitarize Public Schools*. Scott Hardung & Seth Kershner. Reviewed by Daniel Liechty," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 43 : Iss. 2 , Article 13.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol43/iss2/13>

This Book Review is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact [wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).



Scott Hardung & Seth Kershner, *Counter-Recruitment and the Campaign to Demilitarize Public Schools*. Palgrave Macmillan (2015), 208 pages, \$95.00 (hardcover).

Unless you have a child attending middle- or high school, you may be unaware of how deeply military-patriotism and overt military recruitment has penetrated the American public schools. There are many factors involved in this, perhaps most significantly the general rise in military-patriotism during these years of a so-called war on terrorism, but also the fact that economic conditions in many parts of the country have made military service one of the few realistic career options for a large segment of our young men and women. The all-volunteer military places enormous pressure on recruiters to keep up monthly quotas, turning recruitment procedures into actively creative methods of gaining access to young people, nurturing them through long-term friendships, access to military video games, tutoring assistance, and so on, such that recruitment into the active military seems more like a natural 'next step' than a radical transition.

Through stories and interview reports, Harding and Kershner deftly outline the varied procedures of military recruiters who focus on the public schools as their point of access to young people. This is done fairly and objectively. It becomes clear to the reader in what kind of atmosphere military recruiters work, how their work develops, and given the parameters of their assignment, how it is that such methods emerge as logical and even as looking out for the 'best interests' of their prospective recruits.

At the same time, the book also introduces the reader to the lives of courageous men and women who have taken it upon themselves to work toward countering the infiltration of military recruiters into the public schools and offering to young people a vision of life prospects that does not pass through military service as the inevitable next step. I found this book to be fascinating reading on a number of levels, and I suspect many readers of this journal will also.

As one whose consciousness about the military was formed during the Vietnam years, I initially understood 'counter-recruitment' to be anti-military. This is not really true. Although

there are certainly plenty of old-guard pacifists and war resisters represented among the counter-recruiters, Harding and Kershner introduce us to a number of people who do not come at their work from that kind of background at all. Many are former military personnel themselves and have positive things to say about their service experience. They are motivated by simply wanting young people to know they have wider choices for their lives. They are motivated by the fact that, by being able to draw on the magnificent financial and support structures available to them, military recruiters often completely overwhelm and displace other types of recruiters at job fairs, career days and so on. They are motivated by a sense that while the military has its place of honor, there need to be many other areas in the daily lives of young people, in the classrooms, in the school convocations, in school parades and sporting events, which remain separate and insulated from strong military presence and influence.

Furthermore, as this book makes clear, were anti-recruitment efforts understood as anti-military, they would not find a welcoming or even neutral spirit for their work in schools from many administrators or communities. But these same administrators and communities, even in places where military service is held in extra high regard, such as communities in which a military base may be central to its economy, may well be open to anti-recruitment approaches undertaken in the spirit of expanding the mental and career horizons of young people, rather than as simply negative toward the military option. I repeatedly looked up from reading of this book and simply savored the moment of feeling high respect for the various people whose lives and activities are chronicled here. They continue their work day after day in the full knowledge that they are massively 'out-gunned' by the financial and institutional resources of the military recruiters. In many ways they are the unsung heroes of those working for a more peaceful, progressive and democratic society.

I first became acquainted with counter-recruitment through an article written by these same authors submitted for the special issue of this journal on Peace, Conflict and War, on which I had the privilege of serving with Sondra J. Vogel as a guest editor ('Just Say No,' JSSW 38/2) I am very pleased

to see their research expanded significantly in this book, and my hope and expectation is that this book will receive wide attention across fields such as sociology, social work, education, political science and communications.

*Daniel Liechty, Illinois State University*

Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Rewriting the Rules of the American Economy*. W. W. Norton & Company (2016), 237 pages, \$26.95, (hardcover).

Economic inequality in the United States has become an uncontested fact, as low- and middle-earners alike are unable to make ends meet and the very wealthy are prospering enormously. This book follows in a series of books by Stiglitz and others exposing and interrogating such inequality in American society and the rigged game of the economy. While mainstream economists scratch their heads about the seeming riddle of inequality, Stiglitz dismantles arguments blaming each one of the usual culprits: technology, globalization, and a public sector that stifles business growth. He argues that it is not the nature of the market economy itself that is the problem; rather it is the rules by which the market economy is organized. As Stiglitz has done in past work, he is clear in his critique of mainstream economics that a 'trickle-down' approach does not work. But he is more forceful in this book in saying that this way of organizing the economy has actually led to economic inequality. Like other thinkers, he argues that the dominant discourse of economic growth vs. shared prosperity is a false dichotomy. Both economic growth and shared prosperity can and must be achieved simultaneously, and he proposes a major overhaul in the type, nature, and force of the policies (or 'rules' as he calls them) for governing the market economy.

The book is organized into an introduction, two chapters, and an appendix. Using straightforward and clear language to describe basic economic history and principles, the introduction lays out Stiglitz's general argument for the book. The first chapter provides evidence of how certain economic, social, employment and other policy paths have led to widespread